

## WOMEN'S EXPLOITATION AND FEMINISM AS REFLECTED IN THE WORKS OF MUMTAZ SHAHNAWAZ'S "THE HEART DIVIDED" AND ATTIA HUSSAIN'S "SUNLIGHT ON A BROKEN COLUMN"

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### ABSTRACT

*This study focuses on women's exploitation, gender role and feminism as depicted in the works of Mumtaz Shahnawaz's "The Heart Divided" and Attia Hussain's "Sunlight on a Broken Column". This study describes women's marginalization, feudal exploitation as well as gender power during the partition process. To understand women's situation, post-colonial theory is used to delineate women's condition, status and position at that time. It is based on the super-structure of Spivak's and Mohanty's approach towards Post-colonial Feminism. Textual analysis tools are used to interpret the marginalized status and position of women portrayed in the above mentioned works. Indeed, this study is an effort to interpret feudal exploitation and gender agency during British Raj in Indian subcontinent.*

**KEYWORDS:** Exploitation, Patriarchy, Feudalism, Feminism, Empowerment

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Partition of Indian subcontinent was a mile stone in the history of partition. This partition left damaging impacts in the minds of the people at that time. This school of thought gave birth a new sense amongst the Muslim women of the Indian subcontinent. To raise their voices against the oppressed ideology of British female took active participation to highlight women situation during partition. According to Talbot (1995), the partition related massacres and marginalization represented an unfolding human tragedy of enamors proposition (p. 57).

Watching the contemporary society, the women's writers Mumtaz Shahnawaz and Attia Hussain are two contemporary novelists who recaptures the experiences as well as the responses as represented in the selected works. The leading character from "The Heart Divided" (1957) Zohra traces the situation of women's condition under the umbrella of feudalism and patriarchy as she addresses "She would live up to her ideals of Muslim womanhood, her dutiful daughter, loving wife, and a devoted sister (Shahnawaz, 1957, p.



7). In the same way, the leading character, Laila, from *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) describes the same emotion. As she says, the bullying, the bargaining and the dishonesty we are going further and further apart) (Hussain, 1961, p. 70).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The novels *The Heart Divided* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* are two distinguished works in partition literature which describe women's condition as well as gender role during partition. Mumtaz Shahnawaz's *The Heart Divided* traces women's condition under the pressure of feudalism and patriarchy and also shows a gender role and feminism as depicted in the selected works.

According to Jajja's article (2012), "*The Heart Divided: A post-colonial perspectives* is useful to understand the overall situation of women at that time. In the same way, Majid (2013) has produced an understanding short story. In this story, the writer highlights the violence leveled against female. The story "*Lajwanti*" by Bedi and Bhada (2007) traces the gender aspect of partition. This story focuses on the social stigma faced by abducted women at the time of partition.

The novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is a thought-provoking novel which interprets women condition and empowerment in the beginning of 20th century. She portrays her female character, Laila, as an oppressed person in the hands of patriarchy. Kandhere's work (2015), *A Critical Study of Attia Hussain's 'Sunlight on a Broken Column* shows women struggle during partition. Similarly, the article of Deyis (2016) *Violence against Women during the partition of India: Interpreting Women and their bodies in context of ethnic genocide* shows the violence adopted against women. Ahmed's article (2009) *Pakistani Feminist Fiction and Empowerment of Women* is the power to represent gender roles for their equal rights.

### **Women's Exploitation and Emancipation in Partition Literature**

Partition literature is very rich with reference to women. The selected writers give a new sense and direction to the post-colonial women to struggle against patriarchy and feudalism. Throughout their powerful narratives, they highlight the worst condition encountered by women during the partition process. According to Datta (2006), the selected novel *The Heart Divided* is revolutionized the entire women of the subcontinent.

The respective novel portrays the struggle of an active educated woman of that time. Shamsie (2005) writes that her novel was permitted by a well-built awareness of herself as in educated woman both in public and private spaces. In the novel, Zohra's role is a symbol for women liberation and empowerment. She gets education and her education encourages

her to challenge the hegemony of her family patriarch as she responds we must break the walls that divided our people, you are not merely you, I am not just I, we represent two parts of great people to gain liberty (Shahnawaz, 1957, p. 167).

The representation of Zohra is a voice of the entire Muslim women of the subcontinent. As he announces “I would live upon the ideals of Muslim womanhood, a dutiful daughter, a loving mother and a devoted sister” (p. 226). Spivak writes these women novelists did an organized resistance against the male colonial subject (Spivak, 1989). The partition novelist, Mumtaz Shahnawaz and Attia Hussain, are two important contemporary writers who have the agenda of women’s liberation and emancipation at the time of partition. The album of education enables Zohra to come out from the ordinary and traditional life.

In the novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* Laila protects against patriarchal system. We see Laila is working as the agent of the narrative. She identifies Laila as an active educated woman living in the 20th century Indian subcontinent, Dear niece, Laila is being educated to fit into the new world (Hussain, 1961, p. 131). Throughout the novel, Laila acts as an active educated and independent woman. Her education enables her to find a gender role and feminism is depicted in the novel.

Attia Hussain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* and Mumtaz Shahnawaz’s *The Heart Divided* describe gender agency and liberation. According to Young (2003), Postcolonial critics provide a conscious to the subaltern women to free themselves by the agency of struggle and resistance (Young, 2003). She is the direct understanding of feminism and through have well-organized perspectives.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Textual analysis method is used as a design to analyze as the works of Mumtaz Shahnawaz and Attia Hussain. Theory framework central upon the Post-colonial theoretical models of Spivak, Mohanty, Edward Said and other contemporaries. It includes Spivak’s much quoted essay “Can the subaltern speak” (1999) in which she states that “women are twice colonized the most oppressed of these can be seen to be in the position of subaltern” (p. 302). It also traces Mohanty’s concepts of post-colonial feminism and her work, “Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse.

### Objectives

- To explore women’s exploitation as depicted in the selected works
- To locate gender role in partition literature

### Research Questions

- What is the condition of women depicted in the selected works?



- How the chosen writers show women struggle against feudalism and patriarchy?

## CONCLUSION

Partition literature is very rich in women's context. Ahmed (2009) writes "Female narratives give a delightful expression of women through literature constitutes the durable services regarding women condition at the time of partition" (p. 9). This study, however, is an effort to look the women exploitation and liberation from the selected works of Attia Hussain's "Sunlight on a Broken Column" and Mumtaz Shahnawaz's "The Heart Divided". This work describes women's manipulation and transformation on the basis of post-colonial feminist perspectives. This work not only focus women's marginalization but also shows gender role and feminism as depicted in both mentioned works.

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